FREE

TEGA

APRIL 20

SPORTS

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TONY SATUR

OLD SCHOOL FLAMETHROWER

Q&A

Mieko Carey

FRISBEE+SOCCER

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COVER ART
From left, Kieran Daley, Lewie Tenorio, and Mieko Carey along a bike trail in Marpi.

Photography by
JESSIE PAGSINOHIN

Welcome to the third edition of TAGA *Sports*. Putting together this edition was especially exciting, coming on the heels of major sports events in the Commonwealth: the Marianas Cup volleyball tournament, the Saipan Marathon, XTERRA Saipan, and Tagaman Triathlon.

That was the impetus behind Mark Rabago's banner story on Page 8—an examination of sports tourism and its particular importance for the CNMI. We tend to focus so much on the athletes that we forget that they also have a veritable army that comes with them—their families, coaches, trainers, friends, reporters, TV crews, etc.—who all contribute in one way or the other to not only pump in additional dollars into the economy but to also promote the Commonwealth when they go back to their home countries. The prestige these sports events bring to the CNMI burnishes the islands' international reputation, creates a specific and indelible brand for the destination, and puts a little more money in everyone's pockets. At the very least, these events lessen the number of people who ask "Is that near Taiwan?" when you tell them you come from Saipan.

We also sat down for a short interview with two of the islands' more popular sports figures, Mieko Carey and Tyce Mister—who've made names for themselves in the recent Hell of the Marianas and Marianas Cup respectively—as well as with Tony Satur, the closest the sport of fast-pitch softball has to a living legend.

This edition is not just about über athletes, though. Readers at the other end of the spectrum also have options when it comes to getting fit and staying fit. Consider the Saipan Adventure Sports Club, which offers so-called "gradma events" because they are so easy your grandma could do them. Yes, being elderly these days no longer means being condemned to frittering away the rest of your life on the porch, sitting on a rocking chair.

We also shine a spotlight on some of the more obscure sports activities on the islands—spearfishing and Ultimate—and what you'll need if you want to join the fray. Catherine Perry's feature, "Hunting Underwater," is a fascinating look into the appeal of sportsfishing and the unexpected drama that sometimes happen with this sport. For those who don't know what Ultimate is, you'll just have to read about it on Page 24.

We hope you love this latest edition of TAGA *Sports* as much as we loved cobbling it together. Again, for comments, violent reactions, criticisms, and suggestions for future issues, don't hesitate to shoot us an email at editor@saipantribune.com and we'd be sure to consider them in future editions of the magazine.

TAGA
SPORTS

VOLUME 1 NO. 3 | APRIL 2011

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JESSIE PAGSINOHIN

8

Sports as destination: Marketing the CNMI beyond the usual sand-and-surf destination is proving to be a brilliant stroke.

SCOREBOARD

APRIL | 2011

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Where are they now?

Tony Satur is now into golf but that is not what got him the moniker "flamethrower" during his early playing days.

Gearing Up

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24 Ultimate: A Saipan group tries to spread the word about this obscure hybrid sport.

28 Sports is not just for spring chickens. The *man'amko* also has some choices of sports activities that are kind to joints and muscles that are past their prime.

WRITERS BLOC

MARK RABAGO
Mark Rabago's Tagaman Triathlon experience got off on the wrong foot in 2001 when he woke up late to cover the event. He wound up taking photos of random participants at the intersection of Finisher's Street and Beach Road, more than a couple of hours after that year's winner, Jason Metters of Australia, crossed the finish line.

ROSELYN MONROYO
Roselyn has ridden a bike several times—in her dreams. In the real world, she doesn't know how to ride a bike and envies those who pedal uphill early morning in Marpi or cruise the scenic Beach Road while the sun sets. "With the price of gas continuing to go up and so does my weight, maybe it's not too late to turn my dreams into reality. Does anyone have training wheels?"

CATHERINE ROSARIO PERRY
Cathy's biggest catch to date has been a 6" red snapper with a rod and reel. In researching "Hunting Underwater" she was intrigued by the dichotomy of peace and suspense in the sport, both a solid contrast to her own uneventful and frustrated fishing experience.

WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND
Walter has been covering sports for *Saipan Tribune* for almost a year now and has since taken a number of opportunities to better familiarize himself with local sports on island such as Ultimate and Saipan Major League Baseball. He looks forward to trying some beach and water sports this summer.

MONETH DEPOSA
Moneth is a reporter of *Saipan Tribune*, writing mostly education stories and other stuff. As an avid fan of Living Legend Robert Jaworski in the Philippines, basketball is the most exciting event for this writer. For this TAGA *Sports* assignment, she tried to enjoy watching some *man'amko* play a round of ground golf and billiards.

Early Signs of Autism

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Red flags to watch for from birth to age 3

Social

Children with autism may:

- Not share warm, joyful facial expressions, such as smiles by 6 months
- Not babble and coo by 12 months
- Not respond to their name by 12 months
- Use few or no gestures (e.g., does not wave goodbye, point, etc.) by 12 months
- Not play "pretend" games (pretend to "feed" a doll) by 18 months
- Avoid eye contact
- Avoid other people and prefer to play alone
- Prefer not to be held or cuddled
- Have delayed speech and language skills.

Behavioral

Children with autism may:

- Be very organized (e.g., line up toys or other objects)
- Get upset by minor changes
- Have odd movement patterns (e.g., flaps hands, rocks body, or spins self in circles)
- Have frequent temper tantrums
- Be overly active
- Purposely hurt themselves
- Repeat words or actions over and over
- Look at objects from unusual angles.

Other areas

Children with autism often:

- Are overly sensitive to touch, sounds, taste or smells
- Lack fear in dangerous situations
- Have an intense need for routines
- Have learning difficulties
- Lose skills they once had (for instance, stop saying words they were using).

If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your baby's doctor or call the Children's Developmental Assistance Center at **664-4830** for a free developmental screening.

Children with autism can learn, grow and succeed.

Early action is the key!

Big Steps for Little Feet

Division of Public Health CNMI Health and Well Being

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Information adapted from the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, Learn the Signs. Act Early. Supported in part by project H25MC06112 from the MCHB (Title V, Social Security Act), HRSA, DHHS.

CNMI basketball in spotlight

Warm greetings from the FIBA Oceania office in Coffs Harbour, Australia.

Many thanks for the copy of TAGA *Sports* January 2011, which arrived a few days ago at our office.

Thanks also for the article you did on CNMI basketball. Please congratulate Mark Rabago on the work he did in compiling the article and especially in getting people who sometimes don't speak to one another even though they live and work within a radius of a few miles.

It was interesting to read in the article, that the various elements of CNMI basketball have separately come up with very similar solutions to many of the problems of our sport in your country.

I will be very interested to learn what further discussion and action the publication of your article stimulates.

As you can anticipate, I will be in contact with my colleagues in BANMI to see what is the follow-up to the publication of the article and how we might assist them to implement some of the actions outlined by president Elias Rangamar in your article.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the article, thanks for treating my comments in a professional manner, and thanks for focusing and bringing into public discussion the issue of CNMI international basketball performance.

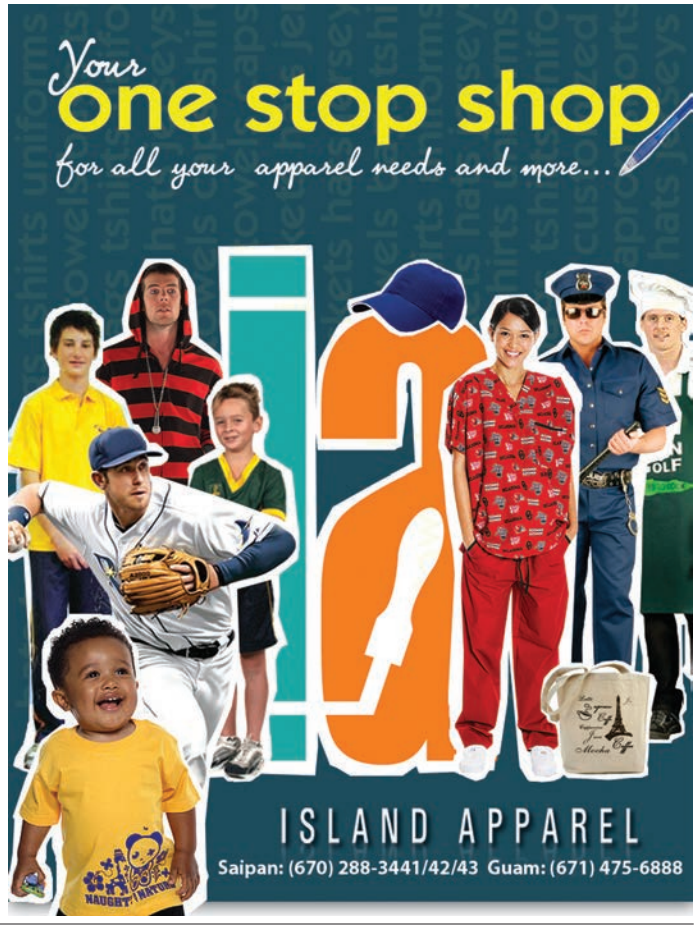
Steve Smith
Secretary General
FIBA Oceania

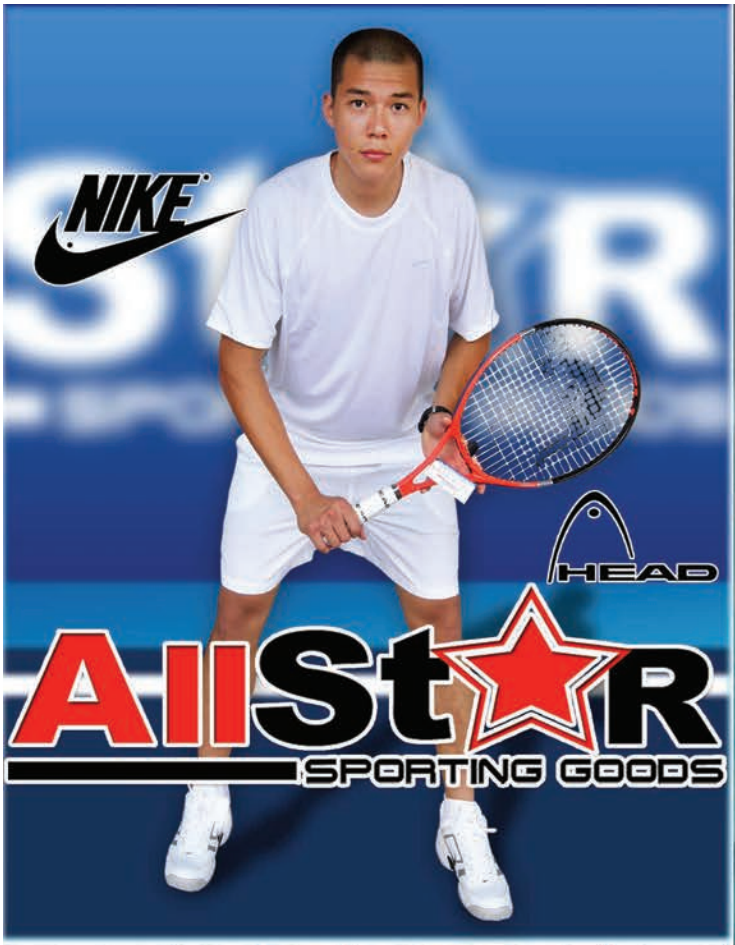
Test of time

I just finished reading the second issue of TAGA *Sports* and it will definitely be a topic on my radio show, "Marianas Agupa," this month. I can see this magazine standing the test of time. As you know, Taga is a Chamorro strongman some 3,000 years ago and his descendants still live on Rota today. And I'm sure they are proud of this magazine. Keep it up! Taga is definitely looking out for you.

Glenn H. Manglona
Host, Marianas Agupa

Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA *Sports* must include the writer's name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

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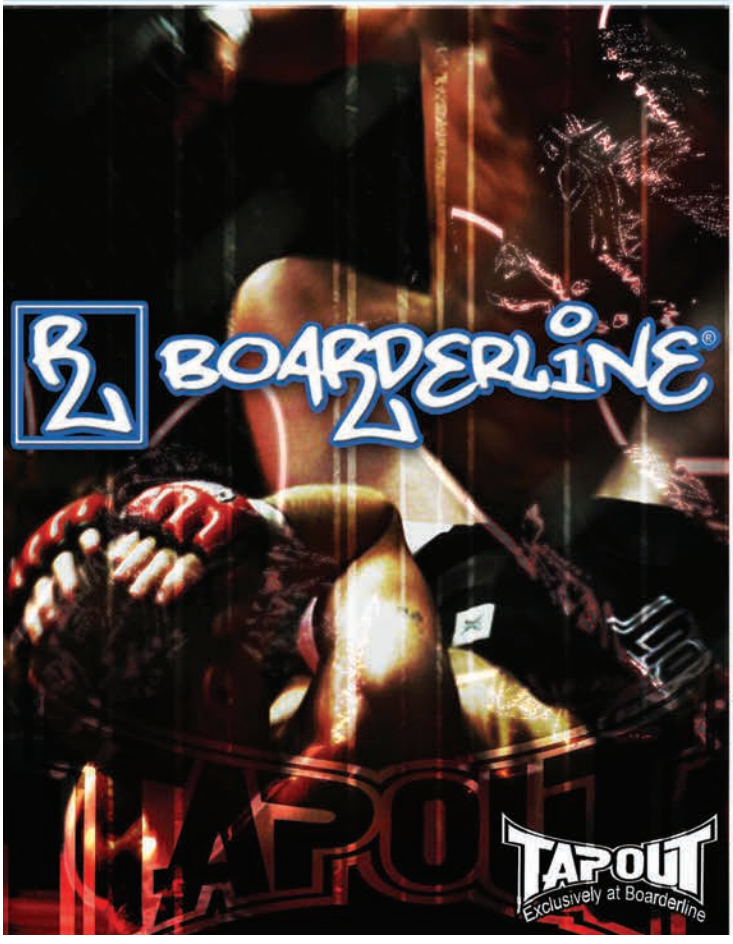
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Warrior WEAR

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

A Saipan clothing brand is slowly making a name for itself in the world of mixed martial arts. Konflikt MMA Clothing is currently the brand of choice for a number of up-and-coming international MMA fighters as well as a fast-rising one from the CNMI.

With a 6-1 win-loss record, Sabah "The Persian Warrior" Fadai is Konflikt's most high-profile endorser. The 5'7" Canadian of Iranian descent is affiliated with Team Deftac/Ribeiro BJJ/Revolution Fight Team and is currently the ESPN Martial Combat Champion in Singapore. The 145-lb jiu-jitsu practitioner is also a Universal Reality Combat Championship title contender.

Maka "Hawaiian Superman" Watson of BJ Penn Fight Academy has also embraced Konflikt. Watson is currently one of the top 155-lb fighters in Hawaii after easing through an MMA record of 4-0.

Another Konflikt endorser is Great Britain's Nick "The Hooligan" Mellor. Relatively inexperienced compared to Fadai and Watson, the 6'3" Mellor currently has a 1-2 win-loss card.

Mellor fights out of Legacy Fight Team of Thailand and is a title contender for ESPN Martial Combat.

Saipan's very own Nate "The Terrible" Flores was also recently signed up by Konflikt as its sole local endorser. The young lad recently fought Eric Kelly for the URCC belt and the Predator Combat Team fighter has a standing offer to sign with the Manila-based MMA outfit.

The 5'11" Flores has a 3-2 record but at only 18 years old is one of the most promising MMA practitioners to come out of the Northern Marianas.

Konflikt owner Norman Del Rosario said aside from the four, various local and stateside teams have also been wearing the brand.

The list includes Flores' Predator Combat Team, Iowa Little Indians Wrestling Team, Shaedon Quevedo, and Alvin Aguilar of Team Philippines.

Quevedo is from Hawaii and is the World Kids Jiu Jitsu double gold medalist.

Aguilar, for his part, competed in the World Jiu Jitsu Championship-Black Belt Category. He is the founder and president of URCC MMA Philippines, which is only the biggest MMA event promotion in the country.

"The designs are very nice and original. They definitely epitomize elite MMA clothing apparel," said Aguilar in an email to *TAGA Sports*.

Del Rosario said Konflikt also designs shirts for Universal Fighting Championship fighters like Mark "The Filipino Wrecking Machine" Muñoz, Junie "The Lunatic" Browning, and Phillipe "Filipino Assassin" Nover.

The former is a UFC middleweight contender and owner of Reign Training Center in Lake Forest, California, while Browning and Nover were finalists of *The Ultimate Fighter Season 8*.

Nover in fact planted the seeds that ultimately gave birth to Konflikt in 2009.

"I got some kind of a big break when Nover asked me if I can design a shirt for him. My wife inspired me to work on my own brand. She said if I design for other people then I can design for my own brand too and Konflikt was born," said Del Rosario.

Coming from a little dot in the Pacific, Del Rosario said other fighters eventually learn of Konflikt through word-of-mouth and the Internet.

"They usually email me asking me if I can design a shirt for them since they saw most of my work with the UFC fighters and they liked it so they wanted to be part of this growing Konflikt 'bruddahood,'" he said.

Del Rosario said the future looks bright for Konflikt Clothing and he said they will soon roll out shorts, rash guards, and other fight equipment.

"We are also looking at expanding the brand to other places and finally our online store is in the development stage so it will be easier for other places to get their Konflikt gear," he said.

Check out the latest Konflikt shirts at 670 The Rocksteady Shop in Gualo Rai, Saipan.

Sabah "The Persian Warrior" Fadai is Konflikt's most high-profile endorser.

SABAH FADAI
PERSIAN WARRIOR

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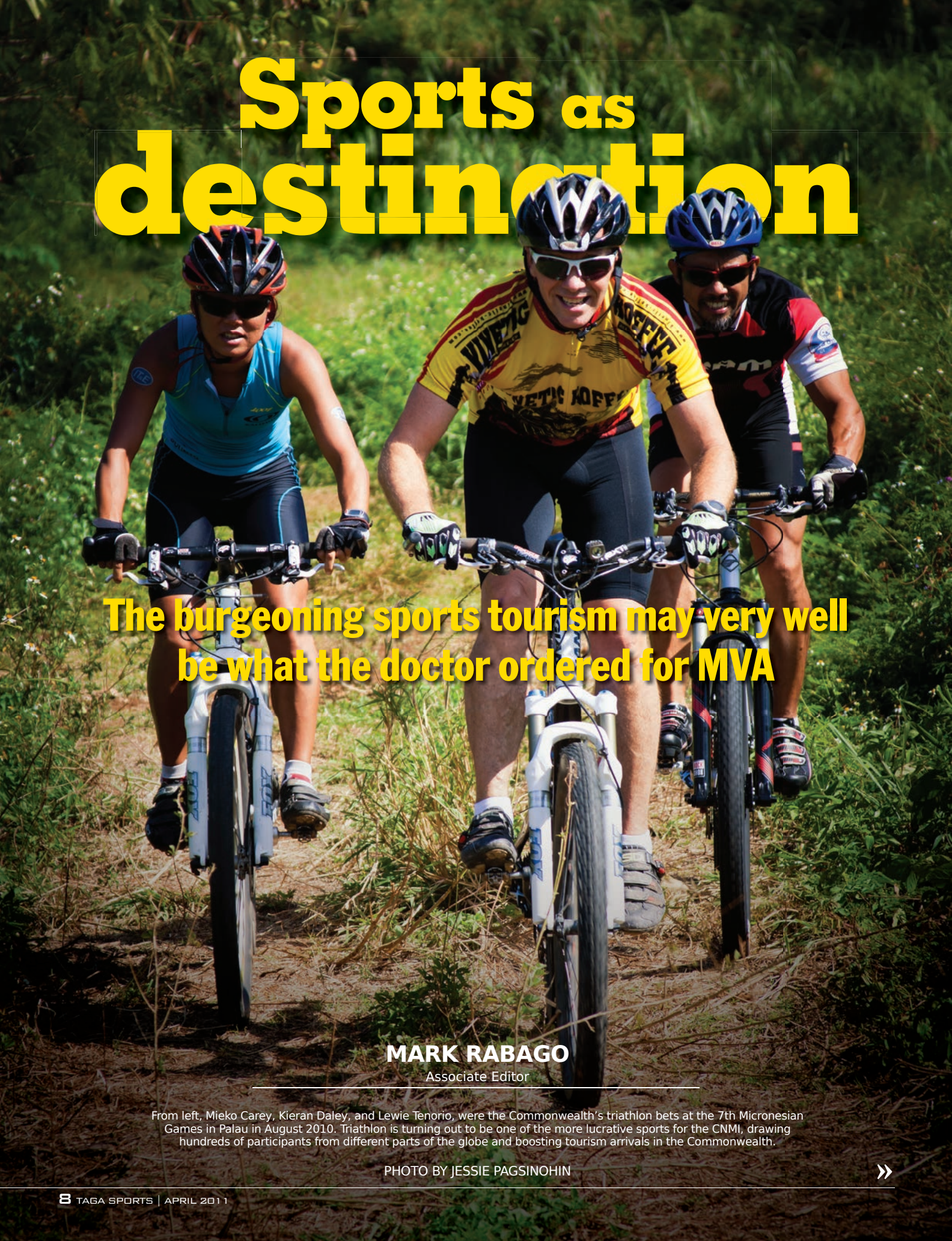
Sports as destination



The burgeoning sports tourism may very well be what the doctor ordered for MVA

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

From left, Mieko Carey, Kieran Daley, and Lewie Tenorio, were the Commonwealth's triathlon bets at the 7th Micronesian Games in Palau in August 2010. Triathlon is turning out to be one of the more lucrative sports for the CNMI, drawing hundreds of participants from different parts of the globe and boosting tourism arrivals in the Commonwealth.

PHOTO BY JESSIE PAGSINOHIN

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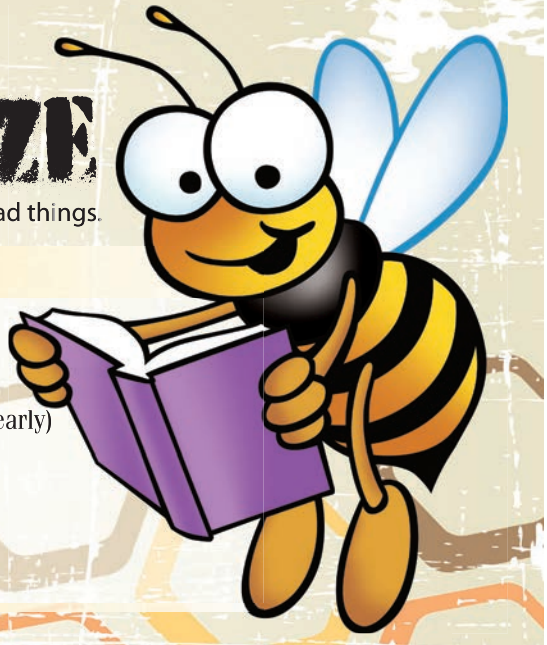

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12 months:	MMR, Varicella (Chicken Pox)
15-18 months:	DTap, PCV7, Hib
24 months:	Hepatitis A
4-6 years:	DTap, E-IPV, MMR, Hepatitis A, Varicella (Chicken Pox)
11-18 years:	DTap, MCV, Hepatitis A, HPV (3 doses)

You can get your child immunized at: Commonwealth Health Center (CHC) Garapan Immunization Clinic • Tel. (670) 236-8745

If your child is past due for his/her shots, please call the CNMI Immunization Clinic at (670) 236-8745/8781/8783 for information on how to get your child up to date. Remember you can immunize your child against 11 vaccine preventable diseases by age 2.

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Swimmers wait for the 1.5k race in Micro Beach during the 2010 XTERRA Saipan Championship.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

FAST FACTS

- The Saipan Marathon features a full marathon (26.2 miles/42.195 kilometers), a half marathon (13.1m/21.1 km), and a 10-kilometer (6 miles) run. This year it became part of the prestigious Japan-based Earth Marathon group.
- The XTERRA Saipan Championship features a 1.5-km swim, 30-km mountain bike race, and 12- km trail run. It is also a qualifier for the XTERRA World Championship, with 36 slots available to the top finishers in each age group. The race also awards points to amateur athletes racing in the XTERRA America Tour.
- The Tagaman Triathlon is named for the legendary Chamorro chief who was fabled to have ripped a coconut tree from its roots in his youth. It features a 2-km swim, 60-km bike, and 15-km run.

All kinds of sports events are held year-round in the Commonwealth but the month of March is usually the most hectic, with the entire island of Saipan abuzz with the staging of not one, not two, but three top-caliber races: the Saipan Marathon, XTERRA Saipan Championship, and the Tagaman Triathlon.

Competitors get to swim in the crystal clear waters off Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio and Micro Beach at the American Memorial Park, pedal to their hearts content—or more like until their lungs could burst—up to Bird Island Lookout in Marpi, and run through the jungle where World War II relics could still be found.

While participants sample Saipan's natural beauty and historic sites as well as enjoy the local hospitality, the CNMI gets much needed exposure in its key visitor markets of Japan and Korea and receives precious tourism dollars at a time when the islands are mired in economic doldrums.

And this is not lost on the Commonwealth's tourism body, the Marianas Visitors Authority.

MVA chair Marian Aldan-Pierce says the Saipan Marathon, XTERRA Saipan Championship, and Tagaman Triathlon each brings something different to the table.

"With the inauguration of the Saipan Marathon six years ago, we now have the fastest growing annual athletic event in the Northern Marianas. Last year we had just under 600 participants; this year we are projecting almost 800, with at least 600 participants from Japan alone. We believe the Saipan Marathon—along with its half marathon and 10K—will continue to grow," she said.

The XTERRA Saipan Championship for its part benefits the CNMI mostly in terms of media exposure.

"XTERRA is a worldwide brand with broadcast, print, and online promotions for all its events. Our beautiful course has earned Saipan the title of 'crown jewel' of the XTERRA series, and we continue to attract international competitors from as far away as Europe," she said.

No less than Team Unlimited, owners of the XTERRA brand, acknowledges this.

"XTERRA Saipan is the crown jewel of the XTERRA Global Tour, and holds a special place in the hearts of the XTERRA community. It is also the anchor tenant for XTERRA in Asia. New this year is XTERRA Philippines, held a week before XTERRA Saipan on March 6. With XTERRA Philippines, XTERRA Saipan, Tagaman, and XTERRA Guam on back-to-back weekends athletes can train and race in the Western Pacific for a full month," said Team Unlimited vice president Trey Garman.

This year marks the 10th year that the XTERRA franchise has been held on Saipan.

The Tagaman Triathlon nicely complements the crown jewel of the XTERRA Global Tour.

"Tagaman Triathlon is the longest-standing triathlete event in the Northern Marianas. Coupled with back-to-back weekends with XTERRA Saipan, it provides a double incentive for triathletes to come to the Northern Marianas and compete," said Aldan-Pierce.

In terms of actual tourism dollars, the organizer of XTERRA Saipan and Tagaman triathlons, Taga Inc. president Wolf Mojica, said the CNMI strikes a veritable gold mine, thanks to the trifecta of races in March.

"I can 'guesstimate' that each athlete will spend at least $750 for food, lodging, and registration. This does not include airfare or ground transportation and this is a lowball estimate based on $25 per day for food for four days. Let's say we get 100 off-island participants for both events. That would be $75,000. If half of them bring two people (family and friends) each that would be about an additional $25,000 (hotel and food) so that's already $100,000. You can factor in shopping and other expenditures like optional tours and other things to get some idea about how much this brings into the community," he said.

Beyond the direct and indirect economic impact of the hundreds of visitors these three events attract, Aldan-Pierce said the CNMI also benefits from the international media exposure the events bring.

"This year, for instance, a media crew from Yomiuri Television will be coming to Saipan to produce a pre-event program on the Saipan Marathon and the islands. This will air to over two million viewers and will bring us $9.6 million in media exposure value before the event in our main Japanese market. Add to that coverage of the actual event on March 5 by eight Japanese TV stations and other media in Japan, »

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Number of participants in the CNMI's three signature races

Tagaman Triathlon

1988	135
1989	222
1990	240
1991	271
1992	361
1993	215
1994	288
1995	83
1996	No event
1997	No event
1998	85*
1999	104
2000	125
2001	141
2002	123
2003	167
2004	142
2005	126
2006	102
2007	101
2008	105
2009	100
2010	138
2011	134

*Estimated by organizers; no record

XTERRA Saipan Championship

2002	64
2003	110
2004	145
2005	179
2006	205
2007	151
2008	81
2009	106
2010	120
2011	104

Includes XTERRA Saipan Championship individual, XTERRA Championship relay, XTERRA Sport individual, and XTERRA Sport relay events.

Saipan Marathon

2007	148
2008	222
2009	533
2010	568
2011	833

Includes full marathon, half marathon, and 10K events.

Participants take off for the swim leg of the 2011 Tagaman Triathlon at the Pacific Islands Club.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

and you begin to see the return on investment grow exponentially. Some 35 media representatives will be here to cover the Saipan Marathon and that is just one event," she said.

No one can also discount the power of word-of-mouth as Garman explained how XTERRA Saipan, and to some degree the Tagaman Triathlon, has captivated the hearts of the world triathlon community.

"Every year for the last decade amazing images from XTERRA Saipan have been published in multisport industry publications and websites around the world. Plus, every athlete who has ever visited Saipan to race at XTERRA has become a worldwide ambassador for the Northern Marianas—they tell their friends what an incredible experience they had, and the word keeps spreading and spreading. Any of the Saipan crew who has been to Maui [for XTERRA World Championships] can attest to this," he said.

Garman pointed out that in the past nine years more than 50 of the world's finest triathletes and mountain bikers have made the trek to Saipan. Among them are Olympic triathletes, XTERRA World champs, and mountain bike phenoms from more than a dozen countries.

He said it's not really that hard to figure out how these world-class athletes have come to love not only XTERRA Saipan but the island as well.

"There are a lot of reasons to love Saipan, and the adventurous course is just one of them. Another compelling feature about Saipan is the history. The race starts on the same beach where U.S. Marines attacked during the Battle of Saipan in June 1944. Then the bike course traverses nearly every inch of the island where the battles took place—including a run through the same caves where Japanese soldiers would hide and fight from," he said.

For Mojica, proof of how off-island participants of XTERRA Saipan and the Tagaman Triathlon have come to the love the island is a bit more personal.

"Participants always have nice things to say about the hospitality of the local community. They say they always have fun whenever they visit Saipan. They also say it is not like most races where they fly in, do the event, fly out, and they are done. They become a part of the community here. They make friends and break bread with us," he said.

Not everything is a bed of roses, though, according to Mojica who, together with NMASA Hall of Famer Bill Sakovich and former MVA managing director J.M. Guerrero, founded the Tagaman Triathlon in 1987 and began organizing XTERRA Saipan in 2005.

"The most challenging part has been financing and getting the airlines to come to the table with bike waivers and reduced air fares. Getting to Saipan from anywhere is very expensive and having to pay anywhere from $300 to $600 for a bike [or double if you are doing both events] is not cheap," he said.

Mojica added, though, that because of the great community and government support as well as their generous sponsors throughout the years, Taga Inc. has soldiered on and will continue to organize the XTERRA Saipan and Tagaman triathlons.

"Team Unlimited, the owner of the XTERRA franchise, has also been very helpful in helping us to maintain their standards for XTERRA. This year, because of the tight government budget, it has been a little bit harder, but we have value-engineered the event to make sure that it happens," he said.

Aside from the March trifecta of races, the MVA also stages other signature sports events throughout the course of the year. These include the Tinian Turquoise Blue Triathlon on Tinian, the Rota Blue Triathlon on Rota, the Coffee Trail Run up Mt. Tapochao, as well as smaller but not necessarily less important events like the Marianas Cup Beach Volleyball Festival and the Hell of the Marianas.

Aldan-Pierce said sports tourism is a strategic way to maximize the CNMI's limited promotional dollars while taking advantage of the islands' beautiful environment and year-round tropical weather.

"By investing in staging sports events, and by wooing and providing support to media interested in covering the events, the Northern Marianas can make the most of our budget," she said.

The president of DFS Galleria Saipan noted that the staging of sports events in the CNMI also indirectly benefits local athletes.

"MVA supports sports tourism by working with funding sources to upgrade sports facilities on island, such as the Oleai Sports Complex. In that sense, sports tourism provides a direct benefit to local athletes as well. We hope that sports tourism will be taken into consideration by our government partners in the planning and renovation of more sports venues throughout the Northern Marianas," she said.

Aldan-Pierce believes MVA should put more money on sport tourism because it brings in large numbers of people and that these people tend to return for the same event, and other sporting events, year after year.

"One major difference between this market segment and, say, the office ladies segment, is that sporting event entrants often bring family and friends along with them when traveling here. Like other segments, sports entrants and their entourage often participate in other activities while here and visit attractions not associated with the event they came here to participate in. In short they often multiply themselves many times over," she said.

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Hunting Underwater

CATHERINE ROSARIO PERRY
Contributing Writer

Still...quiet...waiting...70 feet below the ocean's surface and sweet oxygen.

If you thought spearfishing was about chasing fish, think again. According to masters of the trade, it's almost always about getting the fish come to you. And that requires a lot of what they call bottom time, precious minutes spent waiting below the surface.

"Spearfishing is not really fishing. It is underwater hunting," says Scott Russell, who took up the sport 37 years ago when he moved to Saipan with the U.S. Peace Corps. "I really enjoy the sport, both the physical and mental parts."

"Mentality" is a word that comes up often when spear fishers try to explain what the sport requires.

"You land on the bottom, and your heart has to remain calm," said free-dive spear fisher Morito Asai. "Basically, you can't think, because even your brain eats oxygen—surprise or panic can eat oxygen."

For Asai, the inspiration to take up spearfishing came one day in 2005 when he was cliff fishing and not having any luck.

"If the fish won't come to my bait, I'm going into the water," he proclaimed, and thus began his love affair with the sport. That's also how he met Felix T. Sasamoto Jr., whose name has become synonymous with spearfishing in the Marianas. Asai sold Sasamoto a spear gun that helped earn him two gold medals for spearfishing at the 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan.

Above, Scott Russell shows off his catch during an expedition to Goat Island. Top right picture shows free-dive spearfishers Morito Asai, left, and Felix T. Sasamoto Jr. Picture on page 16 shows Scott Russell in action.

When Sasamoto was only 10, his father gave him a Hawaiian sling—or pole spear—and later showed me how to use a speargun. As the years went by and Sasamoto noticed fish were becoming harder to catch, he started training himself to free-dive. For him, spearfishing is all business, which may explain the proficiency that continues to earn him headlines.

"Basically when I go fishing, I catch fish," he says without a trace of ego. "I was a commercial fisherman, so when I go in the water, I don't waste time. I usually catch market size—parrot, sturgeon, rudder fish, skipjack, most commercial reef fish. That's what I do to keep my family going."

And with all that bottom time, he's mastered some of the best tricks of the trade.

"To catch my fish I usually stay down for two minutes. You have to concentrate and put your heart at a slower pace than a regular heart rate. Otherwise, fish shy back, because they know you're hunting," he said. "Sometimes I mimic a rock and stay still. Sometimes I rub the rubber of the gun to make a sound like a skipjack in trouble, almost a grunting »

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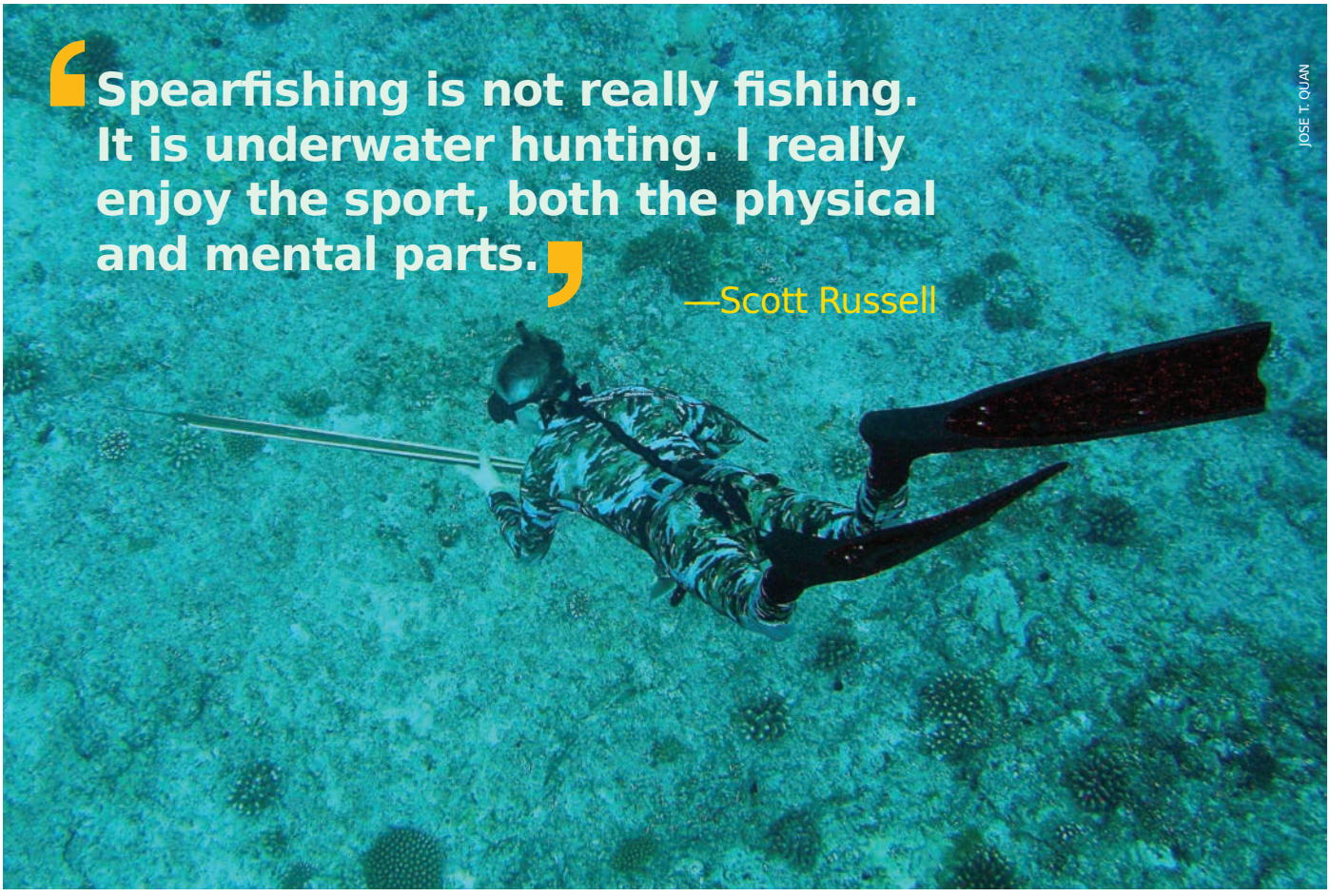
“Spearfishing is not really fishing. It is underwater hunting. I really enjoy the sport, both the physical and mental parts.”
—Scott Russell
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sound. That attracts any kind of fish, especially sharks."

The most common trouble sharks cause is stealing fish off the spear. They have also been known to chomp on fishermen, but that doesn't scare off many.

"I enjoy the challenge and also getting the opportunity to spend time in the ocean, especially during the day when the colors are beautiful," said Russell. "I like being both predator and prey. The twist is you never know when you might become part of the food chain."

Asai exploits the predatory habits of fish by tossing up sand to simulate a ray stirring up sand on the ocean floor. This attracts other fish looking for food that's been disturbed.

By his own admission, Asai's greatest catch was also his most dangerous. Except for the cardinal rule of never diving solo, he may not have survived to tell the story. About four years ago he was following the down cut of the Banzai cliffline when suddenly, at 100 feet, he encountered a 40-lb giant travelly headed straight at him.

"You see this big *mamulan* coming up from the ocean. I knew I could shoot him, so I shot him!" he said.

At that depth and with such a large fish, a spear fisher would hope for a stone shot—an instant kill, but that didn't happen. Asai struggled with the fish, burning precious oxygen. He was finally forced to wedge the gun in the rock face and made a break for the surface. But because the cliff down cut was at a steep 45-degree angle, it took him longer than usual to cover the 100-foot depth.

"My last memory was at 20 feet. I said, 'Almost there,'" he recalls. "The next thing I knew, I was floating at the surface, and Felix was holding my arm."

Asai had a shallow water blackout at the surface and had started sinking before Sasamoto rescued him. After recovering, Asai returned underwater and brought in both his travelly—and his bragging rights.

Banzai Cliff is just one of several good spots for the sport, but when any spot is fished long enough, it's time to switch locations.

"I am an east coast fisherman. That is where the big fish are," said Russell. "Most of my favorite spots are conservation areas now. I still have a few spots on Saipan, all on the north and east coasts, especially early in the season when there are still fish around."

Conservation is both a matter of personal preference and conscience among these fishermen.

"Just one fish in three hours—the fish I want to catch—it gives me a good feeling," said Asai. "I don't fish the ones I don't want, even in the 'guaranteed' range."

Russell says he's witnessed a significant drop in reef fish stocks through the years.

"There are still fish around, but nothing like what I saw back in the '70s and '80s, even the '90s. Now, we have just a fraction of the marine resources that existed before," said Russell. "On the positive side, there has been a surge in interest in daytime spear fishing as a sport throughout the Marianas, and the younger generation is taking to the sport with gusto."

Asai and Sasamoto have been capitalizing on that interest by offering spearfishing classes over the last four years through Asai's diveshop, AquaSmith. However, Sasamoto cautions the new free-dive spear fisher.

"I guess everyone has a goal of diving deep. Before you do those kinds of dives, you have to start shallow," he said. "Don't just dive down. You'll end up blacking out."

Russell echoes that sentiment in succinctly summing up his hopes for the future of the sport.

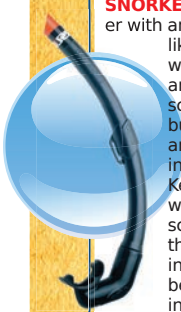
"Dive safe, take only what you need, and leave some for the next generation." TG

SPEARFISHING GEAR PICKS

GUN: Dive conditions dictate your choice of spear guns. A gun designed to shoot over a greater distance will be bulkier and have more drag in the water. For tight quarters, like a cave dive, you need a short gun with more maneuverability. Accuracy is paramount, and the less recoil, the better. **GOOD GUNS: FOR DISTANCE, RIFEE EURO. FOR MANEUVERABILITY, SPORASUB ONE.**

FINS: The long fins must first be comfortable. That is largely determined by their flexibility. Fiberglass fins are lighter than those made of plastic, which makes a big difference over long hours in the water. **FIRST RATE FINS: WATERWAY.**

MASK: Your mask must fit the unique shape of your face. If you press it to your face and inhale through your nose, it should create a vacuum. After finding a good fit, there are options beyond the normal lens. The UV lens reduces the brightness of the sun so there is less reflection off the sand and also better visibility in murky water. The mirror lens prevents fish from being frightened away by your own watchful stare. **MASTER MASK: MANTIS L V.**



SNORKEL: Don't bother with anything fancy, like the snorkels with purges that are popular with scuba divers but trap a small amount of water in the purge. Keep it classic with an old school snorkel that lets you inhale deeply before descending. **SIMPLE SNORKEL: OMERSUB ZOOM.**

SUIT: Under most conditions in tropical water, a simple rashguard is sufficient to protect against too much sun or jellyfish stings. Most come with a cushioned loading pad near the diaphragm where you can brace your gun for reloading. For any dive beyond three hours or so, you should plan for insulation to retain body warmth. A new trend is the camo suit, which camouflages you on the sea bottom. **SWEET SUIT: CAMU 3D.**

WEIGHTS AND BELTS: Weights and belts help you level out your buoyancy. Once you hit 60 feet going down, a nylon belt will start to creep up to your armpits, so a rubber belt is preferred. A one-hand release mechanism, like a simple buckle, is a good choice. **BASIC BELT: MARSEILLASE**

BOOTS: Boots should have soles thick enough to protect your feet when walking on rocks, but not so thick they interfere with your fins. Rubber soles are recommended, and the fit should be slightly tighter than your normal size. **BEST BOOTS: GULLMEW**

GLOVES: Gloves come in all sizes. Some people prefer neoprene, while others make do with an all-purpose glove from the local hardware store. But if you've got a slippery parrot fish in your grasp, you're going to want a glove with a no-slip surface. **GOOD GLOVE: HAWAII SKIN DIVER CAMO GLOVE**

DIVE COMPUTER: While time may appear to stand still in the tranquility of the deep, the last thing you want to do is lose track of it. A dive computer will help you get back to the surface safely. A good dive computer watch will automatically begin counting when you submerge, record your depth, beep at pre-set depths or time intervals, and even begin counting your surface interval when you return to the surface. **DREAM DIVE COMPUTER: CRESSI EDY.**

An open door to wimps and super athletes

Endurance sports such as triathlon are not for the faint of heart but for couch potatoes who have entertained faint thoughts of would-I-even-last-one-mile, why not try joining Saipan Adventure Sports Club events that even your gradma could do?

Saipan Adventure Sports Club offers these types of events for athletes and wannabe athletes who are scared of joining competitive tournaments, and other activities that do not require superb skills or experience.

Rex Kosack demonstrates how to clean a bike during a clinic.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA Sports Staff Writer

"We call them 'grandma events' because they are so easy your grandma could do them. These events build confidence and show individuals they can do it too," SASC president Russ Quinn said.

Quinn is talking of enticers, duathlon, orienteering course, group rides, hikes, running, biking, and swimming events, bike clinics, and other events SASC organizes. These events, if read in the papers, could be intimidating but once you try them, you'll be surprised to find that they are not *that* hard.

Quinn said the public's perception about these "tough events" was what prompted them to "switch" names, from Northern Mariana Islands Triathlon Federation to just plain 'ol SASC.

"Our group is still officially known as Northern Mariana Islands Triathlon Federation, and we are the sanctioning triathlon group in the CNMI. This allows us to send athletes to compete in international competitions, such as the Micro Games and Pacific Games. Two years ago, we decided to add an 'aka' [Saipan Adventure Sports Club] to our name because we did so many other activities besides just triathlons. We didn't want people to think this is just a club for triathletes. It is also for people who want fun events and an active lifestyle," Quinn said. Membership has grown after that.

"With so many activities, we have something for everyone," said Quinn, adding that among SASC events, biking has attracted a lot of enthusiasts.

Fun and educational

SASC may be a sport group that holds competitions, but the club sees to it that at the end of the day, the fun and educational parts of each event are not forgotten.

"We want to introduce fun elements to our events. One race we do is called the orextera. It involves doing a chicken dance and a judge decides who has the best dance and that individual gets a 30-second head start on the race. Another interesting race is the leap frog, where teams of two share a bike and switch off between running and biking. We also have bike clinics where one can learn riding techniques from experienced riders, and get tips for buying gear or making adjustments on bikes," Quinn said.

The orienteering course is also one of the educational activities under SASC. Members are taught navigational skills using a map and compass.

Camaraderie

Group rides and swims are usual happenings among SASC members.

Riders with their colorful cycling outfit cruise through Beach Road and in Marpi after office hours and on weekends, while swimmers plunge into the waters of Susupe or Paupau Beach instead of grabbing a bite during lunchtime.

"The group swim at the tanks on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays is a lot of fun and nurtures good camaraderie amongst the athletes," said SASC member Lewie Tenorio, who used to watch SASC events from his apartment window but decided he was not content with being a mere observer and joined his first race in 2006.

"I was nervous and doubted that I would even finish, but participants that day were very encouraging. Everyone offered words of encouragement, something I try to pass on to athletes just starting off," Tenorio added.

Mamiko Berger, another member, said the fun part of SASC events comes after the race where participants have a barbecue party and share stories.

No more doubts

Tenorio had competed and won various SASC events and these feats were something he never thought he could achieve.

"I've always admired endurance athletes, but I never thought I could be one. Joining SASC changed all that. Now, I always look for ways to polish my biking skills," Tenorio said.

Kimiko Hasegawa, another member, also doubted herself when she first joined a race.

"I did the Tough Love race and it was the most memorable one. I never thought I could bike up Mt. Tapochao but I did," she said.

"If anyone has ever thought about becoming a triathlete or would like to just swim, run, or bike, come join any of our activities and you will always be welcome," Tenorio said.

Quinn said joining SASC will help individuals explore the CNMI's beauty.

"This group, whether you call it SASC or NMITF, really opens up the CNMI for all to enjoy its beauty. Whether you are swimming in the lagoon, riding your bike up in Marpi, or hiking through the jungles, you are seeing beauty. Saipan has so much to offer, and we love trying to find new ways to showcase its beauty," Quinn said. TS

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LEFT PHOTO: Seung Gin Lee, left, and Xenavee Pangelinan wait for their events during the 2001 World Swimming Championship in Fukuoka, Japan.

RIGHT PHOTO: From left, Jin Han, Josh Taitano, David Palacios, and Jacoby Winkfield pose for a group photo during the Arafura Games in Darwin, Australia in 2001.

NMASA by the

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

TAGA Sports Staff Writer

Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association had its Annual Sports Awards Banquet in February and TAGA *Sports* looks back to see who's who on the list since the event's inception three decades ago.

The number of times CNMI Sports Hall of Famer Antonio "Tony" I. Rogolifoi won the NMASA Male Athlete of the Year. He was the first recipient of the coveted award, getting the traditional latte stone trophy in 1980. Rogolifoi was recognized for his impressive games in basketball where he won six MVP awards, five of them in succession from 1976 to 1980. Thirty years later, Rogolifoi was named NMASA Coach of the Year.

The number of times siblings won the NMASA Athlete of the Year Award. Jon Sakovich clinched the award in 1987; the following year, his sister, Anneka, took the yearly plum. David Palacios won the male athlete title in 1994 and 2005, while younger brother Dean notched the same award in 2003.

The number of times Elias Rangamar won the Coach of the Year award—the most by any mentor since the plum was given out in 2004. Rangamar, who coaches basketball and athletics, won in 2004, 2008, and 2009. Jeff Race, Robin Sapong, Michael Stewart, and Tony Rogolifoi were the other winners.

The number of times tennis players notched the NMASA Athlete of the Year award, with the late Irene Alpet making it to the podium first in 1986 and winning again in 1989. Jeff Race was the first male netter recipient of the especially crafted trophy in 1992, while Ji Hoon Heo was the latest to win in 2009 and also took home the student plum in 2006 and 2007. Christian Miller was only the fourth tennis player to win a NMASA yearly award, bringing home the student plum in 2010.

The number of times the NMASA Female Student Athlete of the Year award went to a Northern Marianas Athletics bet, with multi-event athlete Jacque Wonenberg owning five of them from 2005 to 2009. Bo Wang was the first recipient of the award in 2004, while Lia Rangamar was the latest in 2010.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TONY SATUR

RIGHT PHOTO: Alex Screen, poses with a Guam swimmer during a pentathlon meet in Agana, Guam in 1981.

LEFT PHOTO: Tony Rogolifoi, back row, second right, join CNMI players in a photo taken in the early '80s.

numbers

10 The number of times track and field athletes claimed the NMASA Athlete of the Year award. Runner Mike Newman was the first trackster to win the award in 1983, followed by Isidro Tebuteb (1996), Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel (2002), and Tyrone Omar (2006 and 2007). In the women's division, Micronesia's fastest woman, Yvonne Bennett, won three times (2008 to 2010) and Julie Tokyo (2003) and Noriko Jim (2006) once each.

12 The number of times CNMI swimmers won the NMASA Female Athlete of the Year—the most by any sport—with Xenavee Pangelinan winning five of them from 1996 to 2000. Former Saipan Swim Club coach and NMASA head Bill Sakovich said Pangelinan is the best female swimmer from the Commonwealth to date. He said she was a hard worker, dedicated, and was a pleasure to coach. CNMI male swimmers took the yearly plum 10 times with David Palacios, Rezne Wong, and Seung Gin Lee winning the award twice. Alex Screen was the first swimmer to win the award in 1981.

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA Sports Staff Writer

TAGA *Sports* had initially planned to show readers another side of über triathlete Mieko Carey but still ended up talking about sports. Mieko insists that sports is her life, so read on.

What does Mieko mean in Japanese?
Child blessed with beauty and also a beautiful branch.

When did you arrive on Saipan?
In 2003 and it was a dream come true. I dreamed about working in a place where I always see the beach. The next day, I Googled job search and found a PIC Clubmate job. I thought about it for only a few minutes and the following day I was invited for an interview in Saitama. I jumped all over the house even if I wasn't hired yet.

What do you do when you are not training or competing? What is your morning routine like?
I cook. I can make fresh *lumpia* with peanut sauce [Thai food] and almost everything, except steak and barbecue, which my husband [Kevin] cooks well. The kitchen is where I feel most comfortable. It makes me happy.

When I wake up I am like a morning bird. I talk a lot and Kevin does not like it and he will say "I just woke up."

When not training, I work as a Pilates and spinning instructor at Gold's Gym. I was also a fitness instructor in Japan.

You once broke your shoes in a race in Japan while doing the bike leg. Any other awkward experiences you had while competing?
I had one during Guam's adventure race last year. We raced for over 10 hours in trails and all my teammates were men and it was hard to tell them I needed a toilet break.

If you are not a triathlete, what would you be?
I wanted to be a pro wake boarder. I did it so many times in Japan, but it was expensive. I also did ski and snow boarding, skydiving, bungee jumping, and rafting [one time I thought I want to be a rafting guide]. I was also into swimming and running when I was a student, but I never did biking in Japan.

Who influenced you to get into sports?
I remember when I was still a baby my parents and grandparents would take me to the beach every summer and also to ski every winter. We celebrated the New Year by skiing every year until I was 16 years old. I have two older sisters and both of them love sports. I started to go to the swimming pool when I was 3 years old because my sisters were also there. Sports was my life even when I was still a kid.

So what's with the smile you always have every time you make it to the finish line of every race?
Sometimes I feel pain during a race, but when I see the finish line, that pain goes away and I manage to smile. Knowing that people are waiting for me at the finish line makes me smile and pushes me not to quit. The race, like life, should go on, no matter what. You should not quit.

PHOTO BY JESSIE PAGSINOHIN

Mister Beach Volleyball

WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND
TAGA Sports Staff Writer

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Tyce Mister is perhaps the most decorated active male beach volleyball player on Saipan and has won numerous local events year in and year out.

The Marianas High School Co-operative Education & Training instructor has been a resident of Saipan since 1991 and has been actively involved in various sports on island since his arrival but it is in the sport of beach volleyball where this self-confessed beach boy shines. And how not? At 6'2" and with a swimmer's body that tips the scales at 175 lbs, Mister boasts a wingspan of 77 inches that is ideal for the rough and tumble the sport demands.

Mister recently represented the CNMI in its first-ever Asian Volleyball Confederation Continental Cup Olympic Qualifier event alongside partner Chris Nelson and teammates Clay McCoullough-Stearns and Andy Nutting.

"Although our team did not fare as well as I had hoped, getting a chance to compete against Olympic-level athletes was still a very fortunate opportunity and I hope that the NMIVA [Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association] gets to host the event in the future as well," said Mister.

Mister has represented CNMI beach volleyball in the last three Pacific Games and placed runner-up in the Marianas Cup Pro-Am tournament three times in the last four years.

Mister also recorded the Commonwealth's first-ever beach volleyball win in Pacific Games history with teammate Mark McDonald in Samoa back in 2007 and won the beach volleyball gold medal for the CNMI in the 2006 Micronesian Games with teammate Chris Nelson in front a home crowd. That same year Mister also won a silver medal on the men's CNMI triathlon team.

Mister, who has been playing beach volleyball since he was 18 years old and has also played a little indoor volleyball during those days, is optimistic about the growth of the sport over the years.

"The NMIVA has come a long way, especially in recent years, building a stable foundation for beach volleyball on Saipan. They currently offer a lot events for adults and are now working on providing more youth events in the future," said Mister.

To pass on his love for the game, Mister has been serving as the boys volleyball coach since 1996 and recently took the helm for the girls teams as well.

Another one of Mister's all-time favorite sports is adventure racing, which complements the fact that he has been participating in triathlons since high school.

He is also a regular competitor in the Tagaman Triathlon and XTERRA Saipan Championship races and has participated in Rocball and swimming events in the past.

Mister hopes to compete in the Guam Extreme Adventure Race 11 in late May this year, to vie for a third title if the organizers manage to put it on. Mister is a nine-time GEAR competitor and two-time winner (2010 and 2005). He also traveled to Japan last June to compete in the Salomon X-Adventure 2010 Minakami Adventure Race.

"I love everything about adventure racing. The planning, the strategy, the mystery of what the course is going to be like. The whole challenge in general is appealing to me. When I went to Japan I did not even really know my teammates, but we managed to work together to the end and it was another great experience. Since these events can last over a day, adventure racing involves a lot of mental toughness as well as physical conditioning," said Mister.

Dale Roberts catches a Frisbee during a pickup game.

ROSELYN MONROYO

WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND
TAGA Sports Staff Writer

ULTIMATE

Did you even know that there is such a sport as Ultimate?

Yes, Dorothy, there is. It's a combination sport of Frisbee and soccer—sorta like Quidditch without the broomsticks—and, amazingly enough, it's been around since 1968! That makes it one of the oldest sports that hardly anyone has ever heard of.

Even more amazing is the fact that this fringe sport is also being played here in the Commonwealth, with regularly scheduled games and teams that compete in off-island tournaments, believe you me!

I recently observed a few outings with Saipan Ultimate and, after watching a few games, I decided to jump into the action. I lasted only about 15 minutes of non-stop running before asking to sit out for my first of three breaks (I am forced to admit that I have gained some extra pounds since moving here in February 2010).

But what exactly is Ultimate? Originally known as Ultimate Frisbee, the name had to be genericized because the Wham-O toy company trademarked the term Frisbee. Jared Kass, a summer camp teacher in Northfield Mount Herman, Massachusetts invented the game in 1968. One of his students, Joel Silver, also helped refine the rules that are still well known today. Over the years the game was rediscovered in 2003 and has attracted millions of players ever since. There are multiple Ultimate and related "Flying Disc" organizations today around the world.

Although there are official rules for organized tournament play developed back in 1979 by an organization known as the Ultimate Players Association, the rules can differ depending on where you are in the world and with whom you are playing. In May 2010 the UPA rebranded itself to USA Ultimate.

The object of the game is to work with your teammates to advance the disc into the opposing end zone by strategically completing passes back and forth between one another. This game is popular among soccer players as it is a fast-paced game that can undergo multiple possession changes between opposing teams.

By nature, Ultimate players are encouraged to self-officiate their own games by using good old-fashioned "Spirit Of The Game" intentions. After all, this sport started out as a sandlot-type game.

The informal structure is what makes this sport unique. It is generally agreed that taunting, dangerous aggression, intentional fouling or other win-at-all costs behaviors are to be avoided by all players.

Although, I got schooled in my first crack at Ultimate, I learned that it is a great way to get back in shape and the game also serves as an excellent team-building sport. Similar to soccer, the playing field is wide-open and it takes more than just one good player on a team to construct scoring opportunities. What's more is that Saipan Ultimate members are very receptive to new players and, although I met many of them for the first time, I felt welcome to come back for more.

Saipan Ultimate, an independently organized group that meets regularly for pick up games at the Oleai Sports Complex Field on Wednesdays and Fridays at 5pm, is always looking for new potential players to help them compete in off-island tournaments.

Some members teamed up with a Guam-based group to compete in Manila Spirits 2010 last November in the Philippines and have traveled to a tournament in Bali, Indonesia back in 2008.

SU is setting its sights on forming a Saipan team that will compete in Manila Spirits 2011, and is planning on sending a team to compete in either Jeju, Korea or Bali this April. Five years ago, SU made it to the championship game against Singapore in Bali.

For more information, stop by Oleai field if you see discs flying or contact SU at saipanultimate@yahoo.com.

WHAT YOU NEED

Besides gathering enough players to make competitive teams (typically 7 on 7, but team sizes can be flexible) and finding an open field big enough to designate sidelines and end zone boundaries, the only thing you need is a good-quality throwing disc.

Preferably the ideal disc to look for is one that is approved by the UPA, such as the Discraft Ultra-Star. The standard weight for an Ultimate flying disc is 175 grams. There are a number of brands today that make adequate throwing discs, ranging in price from about $15 to $20.

In addition, an on-hand source of hydration is always a good idea.

HOW TO PLAY

Once the teams are created the teams decide who will start on offense. Flipping a coin or playing rock-paper-scissors are common methods; again this game is played for the SOTG.

To begin play the teams position themselves along the opposing goal lines. The team that starts on offense waits on their end of the field for the defending team's "Pull." Similar to a kickoff in American football, a pull—or long throw to the other team—starts the game.

Once in possession of the disc the handler cannot move, but can use a pivot foot of his/her choice, just like in basketball.

The only way to advance the disc is by passing it to a teammate. The goal is to complete as many passes necessary to reach the designated end zone.

RULES OF THE GAME

Turnovers: If a player drops a pass from his/her teammate then it is an automatic change of possession and the defense takes the disc from where it lies and tries to advance it to their designated end zone.

Same thing goes for a badly overthrown pass that either sails way over a teammates head or out of bounds.

INSTANT EXPERT

Defenders can block, bat down, or even intercept a pass and earn the possession of the disc to start their offensive advance.

If the disc handler "Stalls" for over 10 seconds then it is an automatic change of possession from where they stand. Defenders can call out a count down while a handler looks for an open teammate.

Scoring: Once a team manages to advance the disc into the designated end zone, they receive one point and the defending team has to walk to the other end of the field and await the ensuing Pull. Ultimate players coined the term "losers' walk."

STOPPAGES

There are a number of valid reasons to call a temporary stop to the action.

***Halftime Break*:** This depends on what the winning score was agreed upon at the start of the game. Half time occurs when a team's score reaches the halfway mark. Usually the winning score is set as an odd number and the halfway mark is rounded up a point (ex. The halftime break occurs after a team tallies its sixth point in an eleven-point contest).

***Time Outs*:** It is common to allow each team two time outs per half and the length of breaks are flexible (even halftime).

***Fouls*:** Contact made between players that disrupts possession of the disc. If a player cries foul, then play is to resume as if the possession were completed. If the defender contests the foul, then the disc is returned to the last thrower. Incidental contact is not considered a foul.

***Violations*:** Rule violations that do not involve physical contact such as traveling, double-teaming and setting picks. Picks are considered movement in a manner that obstructs the movement of a defender.

***Other stoppages*:** Bad weather, injuries and substitutions can also cause stoppage of play. TS

BASIC THROWING TECHNIQUES

FOREHAND

The middle finger is extended and laid along the rim of the disc. The index finger is placed against the middle finger for power, or pressed on the bottom of the disc pointing towards the center for stability. The thumb is pressed against the top of the disc. The wrist is cocked back, and the arm is extended out from the body.

Source: Wikipedia

BACKHAND

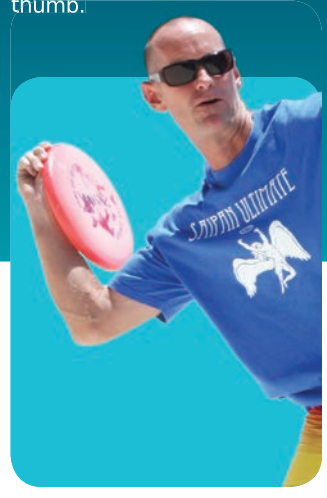
Fingers are curled under the disc's rim, and the thumb is placed on top of the disc to hold it in place. The index finger may either be on the edge of the disc, or four fingers may be tucked underneath the rim. The thrower draws the throwing arm across the body from the left to the right (for right-handed throwers) to build velocity for the disc. During this movement, the arm straightens out.

HAMMER

The Hammer is gripped just like a normal forehand throw. From an open stance, the throwing arm is swung over the head in a similar motion to an overhand throw or volleyball spike. The disc is released using a wrist snap identical to that of a forehand. The angle of the disc on release can be anywhere between vertical and nearly upside-down, depending on the flight path desired.

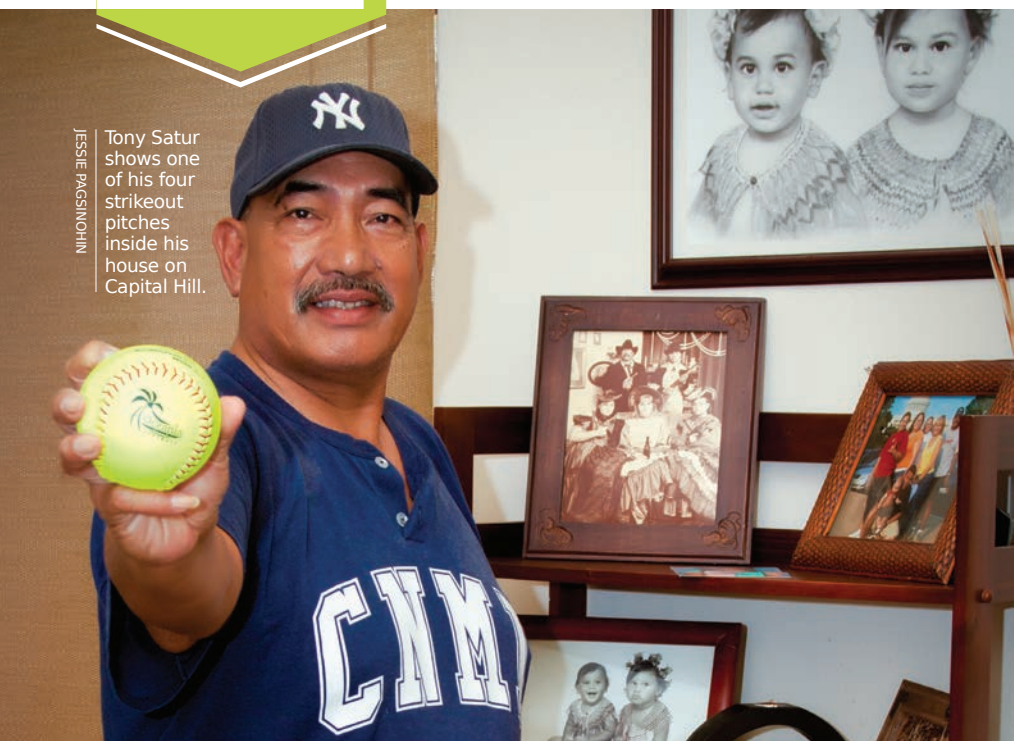
THUMBER

The thumber derives its name from the grip: it is thrown on the forehand side with the thumb under the rim and the rest of the hand against the outside of the disc. The arm should also be tucked against the side, and the elbow bent. The disc is kept parallel to the ground and the wrist is cocked back. To release, the wrist is snapped forward. Spin is imparted off the flat part of the thumb.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

TONY SATUR
Old school flamethrower



JESSIE PAGSINOHIN

Tony Satur shows one of his four strikeout pitches inside his house on Capital Hill.

Antonio Satur is the closest the sport of fast-pitch softball has to a living legend.

He is the youngest player to ever start a Men's Island-Wide Fast-Pitch League game when he suited up for the Hustlers as a lanky 14-year-old pitcher way back in 1970.

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tony Satur pitches at the old Chalan Kanoa softball field circa early 1970s.

Satur also wore the national colors from 1975 to 2005 in regional and international softball tournaments, helping the CNMI to a gold medal win in the 1998 Palau Micronesian Games, a silver medal in the 1975 South Pacific Games, and a bronze medal-finish in the 1993 Arafura Games in Darwin, Australia.

He also collected his fair share of MVP trophies, while amassing all sorts of pitching records—including a perfect game in 1995—in a career that now spans four decades.

Enshrined to the NMASA Hall of Fame in 2005 because of his exploits as a hard-throwing pitcher in the islands' softball leagues, the 55-year-old Satur is now involved in an entirely different sport—golf.

Gone is the spindly kid that was extraordinarily tall for his age. He is still tall at a shade over 6 feet but with a middle-aged man's paunch.

As operations manager, Satur manages 18 staff from the freezer-cold basement of Laolao Bay Golf Resort's newly refurbished clubhouse.

In a nutshell, the affable former P.E. teacher is in charge of the customer service side of everything and anything that has to do with golf in the sprawling Kagman facility.

The doting grandfather came aboard the Kumho Asiana-owned golf course in Dec. 2, 2009, shortly after he returned to the Commonwealth from Virginia, where he and his lovely wife Susan settled following their retirement from the Northern Marianas College.

Satur said he is proud to be working for one of best, if not the best, golf course in the Western Pacific.

"I never knew that the condition of the golf course was even better than some of the well-known golf courses in the U.S. mainland. Koreans and Japanese who have come to Laolao to play golf said our course is in great shape comparable to if not better than those in the states," he said.

Satur also plays the gentleman's game and over the years has become quite good, if not great, in it.

He, however, remains and will forever be known as a fast-pitch softball pitcher for the ages.

Semi-retirement

Prior to moving back to Saipan, Satur enjoyed a life of semi-retirement in Virginia.

"I tried to play golf everyday if I can and if I can afford it. My wife and I also traveled to a lot of places. I also umpired baseball games in Virginia and in fact was certified as an umpire there," he said in a TAGA *Sports* interview in February.

Satur, however, had to give that lifestyle up when their youngest child, Ann Marie, decided to relocate her family from Virginia to Guam in 2009.

He said his wife just couldn't imagine life without the grandkids so off to the Marianas the elder Saturs went.

Counting Ann Marie, the Saturs have three daughters. The other two are Martha, a former national volleyball player; and Neischangpi, who was into basketball and volleyball before going off to college in the states.

Ann Marie herself was a member of the CNMI national outrigger team.

Son of Anatahan

Born on Anatahan on Dec. 2, 1955, to Profilio and Isabel, Satur only spent a few years of his life in the Carolinian island settlement 70 miles north of Saipan. By his own admis-

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tony Satur, first row right, poses with his teammates in the CNMI national fast-pitch softball team in the 1975 South Pacific Games.

sion, he has never been back to his birthplace since 1974.

Satur grew up in the family compound in Chalan Laulau and when he was 9 years old picked up fast-pitch softball from old hands Tom Saures and Rey Odoshi.

"That's where they played ball and I got interested. I was young. I can't use the gloves because I was just in fourth grade then. Instead of using softball I was pitching rocks on my way to the bus stop and after school on my way to the house," he said, eyes looking at the distance.

Little did he knew that those late afternoon games of catch would stir in him a lifelong passion for the game he would one day leave an indelible mark on.

"After I developed throwing the ball I played for Mt. Carmel. It was Kurt Barnes who organized the first inter-scholastic sports league. The teams were Garapan, Oleai, Chalan Kanoa, and Mt. Carmel," he said.

He admitted that he hardly saw action in his first game but one day during practice his coach saw how he pitched and the rest, as they say, is history.

The big leagues

A few years later, Satur would graduate from the peewee leagues to the majors and made his mark by becoming the youngest player ever to see action in the Men's Island-Wide Fast Pitch League.

"I learned a lot when I was 14 years old when I played in the men's league with Tony Taitano and Felix Fitial, the governor's brother. These were probably two of the best catchers in softball I ever had the honor of playing with. They took me under their wing because I was very young, threw hard, and threw for strikes. In fact, they called me a flamethrower," he reminisced with both amazement and surprise.

As he grew older, Satur also shared the battery with former Retirement Fund chair Carl Reyes, who he said was a very smart catcher. "He's the one who taught me how to place the ball. He taught me how to pick a target instead of just throwing it."

From 1996 to 2005, Satur led the Men's Island-Wide Fast Pitch League in pitching categories, ranging from strikeout king to earned average champion. To no one's surprise, all the teams he suited up with won championships with him and his magic arm on the mound.

After more than 40 years of playing fast-pitch softball, two off-island tournaments stand out the most.

"Playing in the South Pacific Games in 1975 is my fondest memory of the sport. I was young, I was just having fun, had no pressure. I just wanted to go out and play hard. I didn't even know we were going to get the silver medal. The Micro Games in Palau was also special because we won the gold medal and at Guam's expense," his voice brimming with pride.

Aside from suiting up for the Commonwealth in the South Pacific Games and Micro Games, Satur was also part of the CNMI teams to the International Softball Federation World Tournament in 1986, 1992, and 1996.

"I personally felt really good for limiting the U.S. teams to one earned run or no earned run during the world championships. We were not prepared to play at that level of competition against U.S. teams but we still gave a good account of ourselves," he said.

He was also recruited by Guam to pitch for them in the 1976 Softball World Tournament in New Zealand, but Satur declined the invitation because he was set to start his first year of college at California State University-Fullerton.

Second chances

By his own admission, Satur didn't take his studies seriously at Cal State-Fullerton and after only a year in college he was back on Saipan. His first job was working part-time for a federally funded program before being hired by Saipan Stevedore in the late '70s.

"That's where I got my money after I let my parents down for wasting one year in college. I worked my butt off at Stevedore so I could have money for school," murmured Satur with a tinge of guilt.

He went back to the U.S. mainland to finish his studies and enrolled at Northwest Missouri State University. It was not all books and no play for Satur in Missouri, though, as he latched on to a couple of softball teams after they saw how the powerful submariner threw the ball.

"In college I had a chance to play for a farm town team in Missouri. They gave me free lodging and food. I got a job and I was fed. I also worked for a construction company. If we're scheduled to play, I didn't have to go to work but still got paid," he exclaimed.

Satur graduated with a degree in education in 1982. He returned to Saipan and went to work for the Public School System in January 1983. He taught physical education for years at Marianas High School before moving to NMC, from where he retired in 2006.

Hall of Fame

In 2005, Satur was voted to the 2004 class of the Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association Hall of Fame. Ironically enough, the honor was lost on Satur at the time.

"At that time I wasn't really excited when I made it to the Hall of Fame because I was still playing. In fact I told them then that the Hall of Fame are for those who don't do anything anymore. I was still playing at that time and I was doing quite well. If you ask me, NMASA should not nominate athletes when they're still active. They should wait until they're done. In my case they nominated me when I was still playing and still dominating," he said, shaking his head.

Six years after his Hall of Fame enshrinement, Satur laments the death of fast-pitch softball in the Commonwealth. While he still plays in the Chamolinian Slow-pitch Softball League, he says he misses the sport's heyday in the '70s and '80s before baseball was king and slow-pitch softball, or mountain ball as they call it, became popular.

"Sadly, there are no more fast-pitch softball leagues and the lack of an organization to coordinate it is the main problem," he said.

As much as he would like to take the lead in reviving the sport, his duties at Laolao Bay Golf Resort and the fact that he still wants to play a couple more years are major stumbling blocks.

If he does revive fast-pitch, Satur said he will concentrate his efforts on developing fast-pitch softball for women.

"We should gear toward women's softball now because good players can get scholarships in the states. It's just like local boys who play a high level in baseball, they have a chance to go to college," he said.

Second love

While fast-pitch softball remains his first love, Satur has made a second career out of playing golf, which has consumed him the past several years.

He is so good that he is part of the CNMI national golf team that will compete in the 2011 Pacific Games in Noumea, New Caledonia.

"At this age, I love golf. If I've known that golf would be like this after Tiger Woods came about, I would've played it earlier. We had an opportunity to be good golfers but we thought it was just a recreational game," he said.

Satur has no regrets with his softball career, though, but he himself knows the fact that one day he would also have to hang up his cleats and retire his glove.

"Maybe [after] three more years I won't be able to play. I want to play when I'm still competitive. I have no injuries, in fact I still do pushups at home. But we all have to give it up someday," he said.

Too old for sports? Think again!

Sports and the elderly—one does not exactly associate one with the other. And for good cause; the body being what it is, by the time we reach the ripe age of 60, the joints are not as limber as they were in our teens, bones are not as indestructible, and muscles protest when challenged.

It would be wrong, however, to presume that the *man'amko* are not fit for anything else other than to sit on rocking chairs all day, reminiscing about how they used to have it good. There are still some sports activities the elderly can certainly do; they may not demand *parkour*-level agility and fitness but they get you moving and get your heart pumping, increasing one's flexibility and endurance.

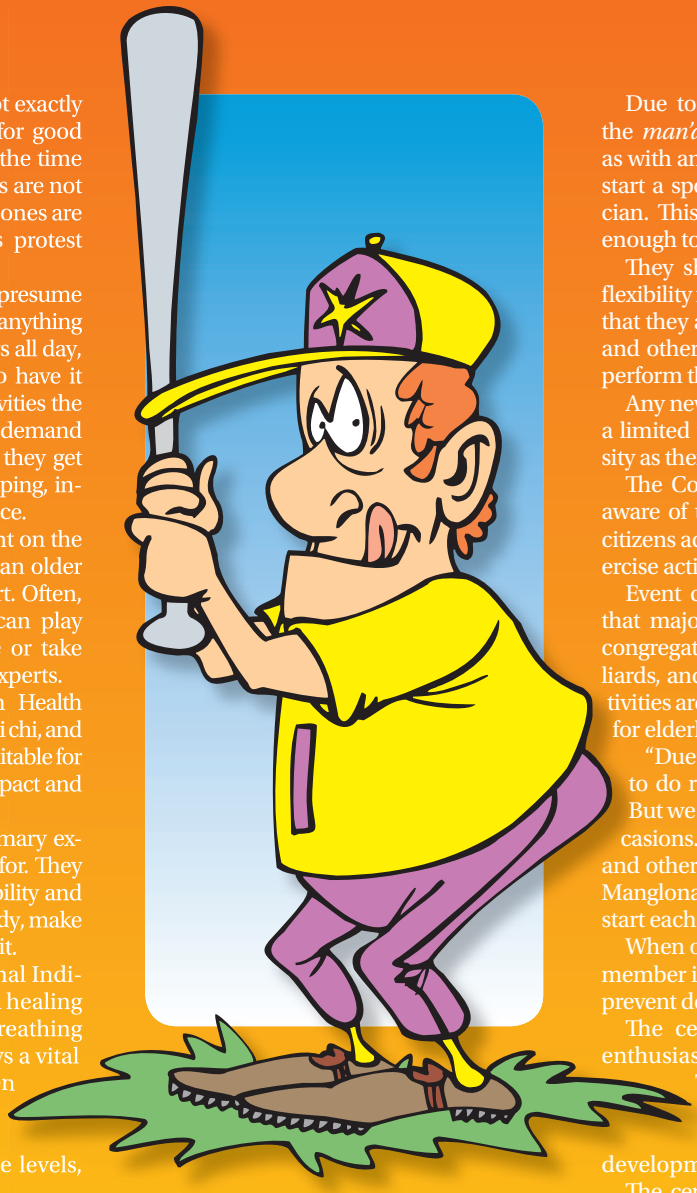
Each sport is, of course, dependent on the individual and can be continued at an older age if the person is used to that sport. Often, instead of stopping a sport, they can play slower, use lesser amounts of time or take more breaks, according to medical experts.

Clinicians at the Commonwealth Health Center said that swimming, walking, tai chi, and yoga, among others, are particularly suitable for the *man'amko* due to their limited impact and stress on muscles and joints

Walking is, of course, the best primary exercise that senior citizens should go for. They should walk according to their capability and this can reduce the extra fats of the body, make the body flexible, and uplift one's spirit.

Yoga, which is a form of traditional Indian meditation, is believed to have a healing effect on one's soul. It includes breathing exercises and meditations and plays a vital role in keeping a balance between body, mind, and spirit. For senior citizens, it will reduce stress, high blood pressure, blood glucose levels, and blood sugar level.

Swimming is another form of exercise that cures many health-related diseases in senior citizens. It has some benefits such as reducing stress and muscle pain and helps keep one fit.



MONETH G. DEPOSA
TAGA Sports Staff Writer

Due to the sensitive health condition of the *man'amko*, clinicians recommend that, as with any age, senior citizens should never start a sport without consulting their physician. This will ensure that they are healthy enough to start an exercise program.

They should also have the strength and flexibility for that particular activity. Ensuring that they are flexible and strong in their core and other muscles will ensure that they can perform their sport of choice.

Any new sport should be started gently for a limited time. Increase the time and intensity as their body allows.

The Commonwealth's Office on Aging is aware of the need to get the island's senior citizens active and offers some sports and exercise activities.

Event coordinator Walter Manglona said that majority of the center's more than 85 congregates love to play ground golf, billiards, and dance sessions. He said these activities are "light" sports that remain "restful" for elderly athletes.

"Due to safety, we do not want our clients to do rough sports activities like football. But we do play bowling and softball on occasions. We concentrate more on walking and other safe exercises for all of them," said Manglona, adding that *man'amko* activities start each day with stretching.

When out in the field, Manglona said each member is provided with water and liquid to prevent dehydration.

The center's billiards and ground golf enthusiasts, Jesus Pangelinan and Jose T. Torres, described these games as both "relaxing and competitive" and promote health and mental development.

The center is also equipped with exercise machines such as treadmills and alternative means of entertainment such as computers for those who want to surf the Internet, a videoke machine, a television, and bingo tables.

10 reasons why exercise is important for the elderly:

1. **To look better.** Face it. You look better when you are in shape.
2. **To feel better.** Exercise is addicting, because it improves your mood and the way you feel about yourself. Researchers have also found that exercise is likely to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress.
3. **Better concentration.** Exercise program was helping them become more productive at home, and 75 percent thought regular exercise was helping them achieve higher levels of relaxation and concentration.
4. **To reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.** Daily physical activity can help prevent heart disease and stroke by strengthening your heart muscle, lowering your blood pressure, raising your high-density lipoprotein (HDL) (good cholesterol) and lowering your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) (bad cholesterol), improving blood flow, and increasing your heart's working capacity.
5. **To prevent osteoporosis.** Weight-bearing exercise promotes bone formation and may prevent many forms of bone loss associated with aging (especially in women).
6. **To prevent type II diabetes.** By reducing body fat percentages, exercise can help prevent and control adult-onset diabetes.
7. **To reduce lower back pain.** By increasing strength and endurance and improving flexibility and posture, regular exercise helps prevent back pain.
8. **To improve your confidence and self-esteem.** Studies have shown that exercise brings about significant increases in confidence and self-esteem.
9. **To lower your blood pressure.** Regular physical exercise can reduce blood pressure in those with hypertension. Physical activity can also reduce body weight and body fat, which contributes to high blood pressure.
10. **To prevent obesity.** Exercise helps reduce body fat by building muscle mass, burning calories, and improving metabolism. When physical activity is combined with proper nutrition, it can help control weight and prevent obesity, a major risk factor for many diseases.

SOURCE: OFFICE ON AGING

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